Indigenous Archaeology, Community Archaeology, and Decolonial Archaeology: What are we Talking About? A Look at the Current Archaeological Theory in South America with Examples

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I review the various forms of political commitment in the field of archaeology in South America over recent decades using three cases: one from Argentina and two from Colombia. The several types of political engagements that can be categorized involve multiple levels of work, from the use of archaeological excavation in projects with indigenous peoples to the rejection of the application of archaeology within the purposes of the indigenous social movement; in between those two options, we distinguish practices such as multiculturalism and its reification of culture. At this level, past, heritage, and history become merchandise for cultural markets.

Resume: Dans cet article, je procède à une étude des différentes formes d'engagement politique dans l'archéologie en Amérique Latine au cours des récentes décennies. Je m'appuie sur trois études de cas, l'une issue d'Argentine et les deux autres de Colombie. Les types multiples d'engagement politique pouvant être relevés impliquent des niveaux variés de travaux qui incluent le recours à des fouilles archéologiques dans le cadre de projets avec des populations indigènes, et pouvant aller jusqu'au rejet de l'application de l'archéologie au sein des finalités du mouvement social indigène. Nous avons pu distinguer entre les deux des pratiques telles que le multiculturalisme et sa réification de la culture. À ce niveau, le

passé, le patrimoine et l'histoire deviennent des marchandises pour les marchés culturels.

Resumen: En este artículo, analizo las diversas formas de compromiso político en arqueología en América del Sur en las últimas décadas utilizando tres casos: uno de Argentina y dos de Colombia. Los diversos tipos de compromiso político que se pueden registrar abarcan múltiples niveles de trabajo, desde el uso de la excavación arqueológica en proyectos con pueblos indígenas hasta el rechazo a la aplicación de la arqueología dentro de los propósitos del movimiento social indígena. En el punto intermedio, podríamos distinguir prácticas como el multiculturalismo y su reificación de la cultura. En este nivel, el pasado, el patrimonio y la historia se convierten en mercancías para los mercados culturales.

KEY WORDS

Indigenous people, Heritage, Caribbean, Archaeology, History

Some Theoretical Issues

As Nicholas established, “indigenous archaeology” (2014) can be understood as a realm of archaeological theory that is engaged with the possibility for indigenous peoples to use, produce, and discuss archaeological data. As indigenous peoples are involved in archaeological research, they may use data to strengthen their relationship with their heritage and with political processes. As Nicholas highlighted, indigenous archaeology thrives on legislation that favours the interests of indigenous peoples and on the commitment of archaeologists and anthropologists to decolonize their disciplines. A feature of indigenous archaeology is that it does not subtract from scientific archaeology; rather, some archaeologists see it as a complement and not as an appendix (Watkins, 2011). There is a large amount of literature on indigenous archaeology; however, some trends can be distinguished, such as the approach of indigenous knowledge to criticize the Anthropocene (Cipolla, 2017) and the use of indigenous knowledge to create analytical tools beyond the Western philosophical background (Todd, 2016). These theoretical currents base their work on a nondualistic vision in which culture and nature are united (Deloria, 1997). Thus, it is possible to understand the archaeological record from local perspectives and not from pre-established interpretation frameworks. In some research presented

as indigenous archaeology, collaboration is an integral part of the projects. Likewise, the power relations between actors must be faced and resolved to become balanced (Cipolla et al., 2019).

Repatriation processes are also included in the indigenous archaeology agenda. In these cases, indigenous peoples do not want to use archaeology techniques but want human bodies or artefacts to be returned to their communities. Many times, these repatriations are requested so that sacred rituals can be performed (Haas, 2012).

In the Anglophone world (Simpson, 1994), more legal tools allow indigenous peoples to claim human objects and remains (Fine-Dare, 2002; Rose et al., 1996); this is unlike the situation in Latin America, where the centralized State declares that everything that is considered archaeological belongs to the nation-state (Gnecco, 2011). Despite this, in Latin America, indigenous peoples use archaeology to support their identity-strengthening processes (Haber, 2009) and to press for the repatriation processes of landscapes and artefacts (Londoño, 2019).

In addition to indigenous archaeology, “community archaeology” can be defined as archaeology in which the community rules the research (Marshall, 2002). Another name for this concept is “archaeology from below” (Faulkner, 2000), and the same idea defines the research objectives. Some academics share the opinion that community archaeology is defined by the active participation of local groups in the formation of data that can help the project in general (Ferreira, 2010). Digging, analysing data, and presenting them to the public are conceived as phases that must be negotiated with local communities. This type of archaeology should be understood as very distant from the practice of heritage education, which is a way of directing perceptions about the past. Contract archaeology has trivialized the collective construction of the past, turning the social production of history into another practice of civil works contracting (Gnecco & Dias, 2015). One feature that is a determining factor of heritage education carried out in contract archaeology projects is its scant attempt to question the historical narratives imposed by the Nation-State and the power groups that support it. In this way, many South American archaeologists believe that the historical narrative that is formed in heritage education is illegitimate and comes from a political point of view, although this is the most popularized practice. For some South American academics, the use of heritage education, developed in various archaeology contract projects, is a way of performing archaeology without political or community effects; that is, multicultural archaeology (Gnecco, 2012). The departure to multicultural archaeology supposes an archaeology outside of modernity (Gnecco, 2017) that, in the opinion of several academics in South America, could be considered a relatedness archaeology (Gnecco, 2009; Haber, 2009). Relatedness is an adjective used to describe a kind of archaeology that attends to

indigenous peoples' ontologies and works inside those frameworks. This brings us to the next category: decolonial archaeology.

Decolonial archaeology is a practice that partakes in decolonial thought, which appears in the context of developing countries (Mignolo, 2009) or the global South. For decolonial thought, the West built an image of the Other, produced through colonialism, which expropriated communities from their natural and cultural resources. The West constructed questions that asked about the backwardness of these nations, ignoring the obstacles put into the development of those nations by colonial empires. Thus, decolonial thinking seeks to unmask modernity and the subjection of the other. Decolonial archaeology is a practice that transcends forms of archaeology based on ethics to an archaeology based on politics (Gnecco, 2015; Hamilakis, 2018). There is some consensus that decolonial archaeology seeks to question the heteropatriarchal version of the modern human being and allow space for other modernities or alternative modernities (Escobar, 2007).

As I stated above, there is an enormous amount of literature on indigenous archaeology, community archaeology, and decolonial archaeology. In this literature, two significant tendencies can be seen. The first is archaeology that favours community interests, whether of indigenous, peasant, or urban societies. The second trend is defined by the efforts of archaeologists working on contract archaeology projects to generate entertaining content favouring a positive image of the interventions carried out by civil works. Within this second trend, there exists public archaeology and the projects therein aimed at improving the consumption of archaeological knowledge in society (e.g., Merriman (Ed), 2004). The first trend is related to local political projects' goals, while the second trend is related to the need to abide by regulations regarding archaeological heritage. The second trend relates to more instrumental heritage education needs, such as those found in museums, schools, and universities. We can also distinguish a trend of citizen collectors seeking to rescue antiques. In these cases, large middle-class groups become consumers of material culture related to historical sources, as in the case of community archaeology associated with intertidal archaeology projects (Cohen et al., 2012). As many authors have shown (Renz, 2011; Taussig, 1997), heritage education is related to the need to introduce nationalist narratives to society. Nationalist narratives become tools to activate the systems that give life to the imagined community (Anderson, 1993), that is, the nation. The imagined communities are built on museums, squares, and statues, commemorations, and holidays that make history perceptible as a legacy.

As we see today, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and after the murder of G. Floyd, the nation's narratives begin to be questioned to allow for the access of other narratives. The criticism of the allegorical

monuments to Franco in Spain, to Julio Argentino Roca in Argentina, and to Robert E. Lee in the USA is signs that the images of past perceptions of modernity worldwide are collapsing (Londoño, 2019).

Now that I have presented an overview of the analytical tools that define other archaeologies, I would like to present three cases involving archaeology and indigenous peoples in South America to highlight the conceptual constructs that were used in and appeared from those experiences.

Novirao: A Nasa Indigenous People

Nasa society exists throughout a large part of southwestern Colombia. Within the hegemonic narratives that have been placed on them, the Nasa were considered one of the most challenging tribes to dominate in the colony (Franco, 2019; Londoño, 2002; Rappaport, 1985). The Nasa are divided into indigenous reservations, some older than others; the oldest ones are found within the heart of the Colombian Andes, in a region known as Tierradentro (the hinterland). In 1997, I carried out indigenous archaeology work with the Nasa de Novirao community a few kilometres from the capital of Cauca, Popayán (Figure 1).

This community had just recovered the Hacienda Novirao that was in the hands of a landowner from Popayán. The Nasa natives of Novirao had

Figure 1. Source: Google Earth. Author: Wilhelm Londoño Díaz

set out to recover their land by disobeying the landowners who had them almost enslaved. The relationship between the indigenous people and the landowner was given under the premise of “terraje”; the indigenous people would pay with six days of work for ability to work a small plot on their day of rest. In the late 1980s, the Nasa de Novirao rebelled and managed to get the State to buy the hacienda and cede it to the indigenous people.

As said by Mr. Julio Cucuñame, Nasa from Novirao:

The landowners and the priests enslaved us. We had to work the land for free, for priests and landowners; they only gave us Monday as a day off, and we had to use it to work the farm. Then came a movement to organize the community; the community understood that it was necessary to organize and fight for the territory, which, in the end, is ours by right (1998 field notes).

In theoretical terms, the research I carried out in Novirao, as a requirement to graduate as an anthropologist, was carried out from a decolonial perspective. I started from the principle that historic-cultural archaeology was an instrument that generated a rigged narrative in which archaeologists presented the Nasa as recent emigrants who came to unfairly dispute the land that now belonged to the heirs of the Spanish tradition. In this way, the archaeological work that the Nasa wanted would allow us to counter the official narratives.

With the 1991 constitution, some things were made more accessible for indigenous peoples, such as the formation of their educational projects and some decentralization to improve their access to financial resources. Despite the constitution, local governments, such as city halls and governorates, were indifferent to indigenous peoples' claims to education, roads, and health.

By the late 1990s, the Nasa of Novirao wanted to perform historical research to understand how historians had constructed them as a historical and archaeological object; it was a kind of archaeology of their archaeology made by foreign academics. They also wanted to know what had happened to their history since the church had banned it. As Hernández and Gnecco (Gnecco & Hernández, 2008) showed, colonialism implied a silencing of indigenous narratives about the past, which were defined by the church as idolatries. The decolonization of memory involved defying the prohibitions imposed by Catholicism.

In the 1990s, it was already possible that within the indigenous communities of Colombia, people could speak again about genealogies of origin and about the world seen from local ontologies. When indigenous people began to revisit their sacred sites considered to be cursed by the church, questions began to appear regarding the community's relationship with

Tierradentro. This is how the first archaeological explorations of the Novirao territory were planned.

In Novirao, after surveying the territory, we chose to start digging a terrace site that was considered incredibly old. Due to the shallow depth of the organic layer, materials made with pre-Hispanic and colonial techniques were quickly recovered by the archaeological research team. The pottery was similar to the classic Tierradentro types, which was a good result (Londoño, 2002). During the excavations, it became clear that the ceramic types of pre-Hispanic technologies were similar to those of Tierradentro; it was also clear that this pottery was found with the colonial types that had prevailed in the Popayán Valley in the eighteenth century (Londoño, 2011) (Figure 2).

After the archaeological research, the region was associated typologically with the Tierradentro pottery clusters. This was interpreted as a positive sign in the historical research process. At the beginning of the 2000s, the historical process had given way to a strengthening of the mother language (Rojas et al., 2011); we could say that the historical research team was a good starting point in the political venue. The need for historical data to underpin political processes, such as the diffusion of the mother language within the community and the use of locally produced historical knowledge for the teaching of schoolchildren, was dynamics that occurred after the decolonization of their territory and their memory and after the use of

Figure 2. Novirao's archaeological team. Author: Wilhelm Londoño Díaz

archaeology for local empowerment. In this case, there was no question regarding the need to use scientific procedures to assess historical connections when bureaucrats were dismissing the notion of recognizing the Nasa de Novirao as a Nasa indigenous community.

If we look at the context of southwest Colombia, we find that indigenous peoples have developed a whole agenda of indigenous archaeology that has allowed them to decolonize history and culture. One piece of evidence of this process is that the Nasa de Novirao carried out archaeological research, even knowing that the practice could have been the cause of the Paez River avalanche that had occurred years before; some older adults had held the archaeologist Mauricio Puertas responsible for destabilizing the territory. I remember a meeting at which the community members, comprising more than 200 people, asked me, through Julio Cucuñame, how much the excavations would affect the community's territory. Since I did not speak Nasa Yuwe, they had to translate for me, and I could understand that the elders were afraid that the archaeological excavations were a kind of wound in the earth that might not heal. At this point, I had to promise that the excavations would not be more profound than an excavation necessary to plant a potato. This was how the elders permitted the young people of Novirao to join the investigation team.

Now, I will present the case of the Puna de Atacama, Argentina. There, I developed indigenous archaeology projects with the Coya Atacameña community of Antofalla.

Antofalla: A Trip to the Heart of Andean Ontology

The village of Antofalla is settled in the northeast of the Argentine province of Catamarca, in northern Argentina, on the border with Chile (see Figure 3). The village has a long history of visiting archaeologists, who have always seen the inhabitants as ignorant and dirty (Haber, 2000; Londoño, 2017). Since Puna is a high-altitude desert, the explorers who visited the area at the beginning of the XX century thought that these oases were caravan transit points. Therefore, they denied the local ontology and the long human occupation of the area (Haber, 2006).

As has happened in Latin America for many indigenous peoples, the indigenous people of Antofalla were facing the constant threat of expropriation of their lands due to the mineral wealth of the land. Their land had not yet been expropriated at the end of the nineteenth century; at the beginning of the twentieth century, interest in the region increased due to economic expansion requiring land for agribusiness.

Unlike the Colombian case, in Antofalla, the task was not to convince bureaucrats of the pre-existence of the community, but to prove it to the

tains allows for the breeding of the herd is celebrated in several ways, such as through the digging of holes in the ground to feed Pachamama.

Although it is challenging for the people of Antofalla to produce a theorization of the ontology locally, it is quite clear that the people of the Puna celebrate the magic that appears when anthropogenic forces cross with water and soil dynamics to produce life. What is celebrated in Antofalla is the building and the giving of life provided by the relationship between human and nonhuman beings. The celebratory practice is called “corpachada”, which means to celebrate with the Pachamama, the mother of all beings. Haber summarized these networks of networks in relatedness theory (Haber, 2009). This theory emphasizes the connections between human and nonhuman beings in the development of the world. In the world of relatedness, it is mandatory to give back what is received. In this sense, something must be returned for the water that comes down from the mountain and for the vicuñas that are not domesticated. Likewise, everybody must give thanks for the water that allows for the alfalfa fields with which the herd of llamas is nurtured. In this case, the Coyas Atacameños recognize that they are raised by the Pachamama just as they raise the herds of llamas and sheep. In the Andean world, a human’s actions must be backed by their peers; this is the world of sympathies giving order to the world of analogies. When the corpachada is made, it is given to the Pachamama to drink, eat and smoke, as a way of giving back to the visible world made possible with her powers. That is, the nurture policy allows all the beings surrounding the Puna to live.

Another thing we could learn from this experience is that indigenous peoples’ political action must deal with the hegemony ontology; this is because the analogical ontology should be subordinate to modernity in the game of multicultural interactions between the State and the indigenous people. The anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena (2009) has discussed how Andean communities face the process of political recognition within a language and a way of thinking that is not their own. It is difficult for Latin American states to accept that two things must go with the political recognition of indigenous communities: recognition of their ontology and their nurturing policy and recognition of that policy as a situated practice. For the governments that manage the State, it is easier to grant political recognition without its geographical correlates; this is a big problem for indigenous peoples because they cannot manage and care for their territory using the nurturing policy (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Corpachada in the Puna of Atacama. Author: Wilhelm Londoño Díaz

Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: Back to the Mother's Land

The case that I will describe below corresponds to the Kággaba or Kogui community of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (SNSM). The Koguis are mainly settled in villages in the La Guajira and Magdalena Departments in northern Colombia (Ricaurte, 2004). Within the ethnographic literature, the Koguis are people about whom there are abundant references. The best works correspond to G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, who, in the 1940s and 1950s, performed extensive fieldwork within this community (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1985) (Figure 5).

Although the Kággaba are thought to be a nation, there are marked differences between different Kogui settlements. The differences are basically due to the Koguis, who settled in the southern basins, accepting Pentecostalism a few decades ago. This is unlike the northern Kággaba, who have been influenced less by international churches. However, it is futile to affirm that the Protestant religion's imposition has been a limitation for the local ontological vision. We simply have no data and cannot make these inferences. What we can verify is that the Koguis who have adopted Pentecostalism tend to be more receptive to certain ethics that are necessary to become a professional in a liberal profession; thus, the southern

In the case of the southern Koguis, they are in the robust process of strengthening their language through ethnoeducation (Gil, 2016). In this process, the aim is to generate a sense of Kogui citizenship without compromising local visions in which the territory is a subject of rights. In contrast, the northern Koguis are not engaged in an ethnoeducation project but want a sort of decolonization of the territory to exercise territorial autonomy (Mestre & Rawitscher, 2018). For this reason, several years ago, the Kággaba of the northern basins began a process of recovery from what was known as the Pueblito Chairama archaeological site. The Kogui name is Teykú, in honour of an ancient authority: “Mamo Teykú”. To achieve this recovery, the Kággaba had to present several demands to the Colombian State, showing that the existence of the archaeological site violated the right of the community to self-determination. According to some advisers that I consulted, this process began in the 1980s, when the indigenous people created the indigenous social movement of Northern Colombia: Gonawindua Tayrona Organization (OGT). According to the anthropologist Julio Barragán (personal communication), the OGT organization began requesting the delivery of property from the archaeological sites Ciudad Perdida (Lost City), and Pueblito Chairama. Those requests were dismissed before the 1990s, as there was no constitutional framework to allow such

repatriations. This process had to wait until the 2010s, when OGT, through lawyers, presented actions to guarantee their fundamental rights, among them the right to culture, to legitimize the villages' repatriation efforts. Since there is now a legal expression for the Colombian State to attend to these repatriation processes, finally, in 2016, the first favourable rulings allowed some places to be excluded from the flow of tourists in what is considered one of the areas with the highest tourism in Colombia: the Tayrona Natural National Park. When looking at the regulations that allowed the Natural Parks to close some areas considered by the Kággaba as sacred, the rules made by the government emphasized that the State had yielded to the claims of the Kággaba because their ontology was comparable to the goals of conservation. Thus, the success of the site closure processes in Tayrona Park was because the State equated the claims of territorial autonomy with the conservation strategies of the State. This has to do with the representations that have been made of the Kággaba throughout the twentieth century (Orrantia, 2002). Once the preservation of the environment appeared as the dominant narrative, the SNSM became a conservation site, and its indigenous people were theorized as "ecological natives" (Ulloa, 2004).

In 2018, the northern Kággaba managed to get the Colombian State to prohibit tourists from entering the main square of Teykú in the Tayrona Natural National Park. The Kággaba celebrated the event as a triumph and noted that, from now on, the site would take the name that it has always had: Teykú. Within the Kággaba mythology of the northern villages, Teykú was the name of a mamo, who is the authority of the Kággaba. In the mythology, Teykú professed the principles of being Kággaba that are enshrined in the Sé Law. Then, by recovering Teykú, it was possible to set up a kind of mamos' university, not because that was a new project but because that was the village's function: to allow the instruction of mamos under the principles of the great civilizing hero Teykú. In this sense, the local inhabitants of Teykú are against the archaeological investigations that were carried out in Teykú because these investigations stole the sacred objects that were part of the offerings that had been given to this mythical character.

In the early 2010s, we held workshops at the Universidad del Magdalena, and it became clear that for a century of archaeology in northern Colombia, archaeologists had finished a sacred site by sweeping the sites of their offerings (Londoño, 2002). These offerings were made up of polished quartz known as tumas; the tumas are agents that allow the communication of the current Koguis with the principles of creation. Since the Kággaba planted them inside clay pots, some of them were broken and registered as "garbage clusters" or accumulation sites. As Juan Nieves, the Kogi leader of Teykú emphasized, "archaeology has violated our sacred

sites, taken away the tombs, and produced an imbalance.” (Personal communication to the author).

It seems that archaeology in northern Colombia is entering a re-evaluation phase since indigenous movements have been gaining political ground. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was great pressure on regions in northern Colombia from traditional political sectors to become tourist exploitation zones. Now, in during the pandemic, this political sector has demanded legal regulations that define sacred sites. Unlike the two earlier cases, there are still things to be defined in northern Colombia, such as the possibility of indigenous territorial autonomy (Figure 6).

Discussion

If we take stock of the three cases presented above, we realize that the organizational processes of indigenous peoples have been taking place in southwestern Colombia for decades. The projects of the Nasa or the Misak concerning the use of history and archaeology are long-standing. Likewise, these processes have been supported by a robust social base that attempted to perform territorial and cultural decolonization processes. Even in south-

Figure 6. Juan Nuvita in Makútama. Photo by: Anghie Prado Mejía & Wilhelm Londoño Díaz

west Colombia, the indigenous social movement managed to start thinking about the need for a particular indigenous jurisdiction in the country. When reviewing the specialized literature, it is easy to suppose that enormous strides in decolonization have been made in this region (Gómez, 2000). Undoubtedly, the great strength of the indigenous social movements in southwestern Colombia was that these communities managed to defend themselves against attempts at disintegration in the colony and in the republic. During the time of the colony, for example, many indigenous people from the southwest learned to read and write so that they could send letters to the Crown with large lists of grievances. This allowed the colonial bureaucracy to act on the matter and generate measures to protect indigenous subjects (Londoño, 2006). During the republic, these indigenous peoples managed to make agreements with the regional leaders; the agreement was for indigenous peoples to give men to armies in exchange for the government to respect the titles of indigenous reservations given during the colonial period (Gnecco & Londoño, 2008).

This historical background is related to the great strength that the indigenous social movement currently has in this region of Colombia; the need to defend the territory and for political autonomy has made archaeology an instrument of political struggle. In the case of Novirao, it was clear that archaeology was used in an adverse context of ethnic discrimination. This example teaches us how archaeology is configured in these parts of the global south as an instrument for decolonizing historical narratives. Unlike what indigenous archaeology could be in the global north, in Latin America, social movements risk things such as territory and the right to life. The Latin American elites do not have a warning to agree with multinational governments on the displacement of communities to carry out hydrocarbon exploitation projects. Therefore, the past is not only a scene of symbolic struggle but is also a political instrument that allows for the activation of some measures that the State must consider in the framework of a multicultural global policy. We could think of some effects of this trend, such as some Latin American archaeologists' inclination for theorists such as Walter Dignolo and Enrique Dussel (Paz García, 2011). The main consequence of this trend is that decolonial archaeology, practiced mainly by indigenous communities, does not seek to contribute to the description of cultural diversity, as the tradition of American anthropology supposes, but seeks instead to demonstrate how the building of the nation-state generated a process of territorial and cognitive dispossession of indigenous peoples.

Although anthropology departments are designed under the classic Boasian model in Colombia, there is a tradition of decolonial theory that is clearly seen in works by academics such as C. Gnecco from the Universidad del Cauca and L. Vasco from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

It is important to mention that this decolonial archaeology has its own methodological features, such as looking in the colonial and republican documentation for proof of the processes of territorial dispossession; this implies building a base that demonstrates how colonialism and endocolonialism have militated against indigenous, peasant, and Afro-descendant communities. These conceptual preferences make decolonial archaeology a practice that is off-centred from the nation-building project that has characterized traditional archaeology in Latin America. Thus, people who practice decolonial archaeology do not claim that their data are evidence of universal processes of accumulation of power, as scientific archaeology tries to do, but instead seek to teach the trajectories that take place within colonialism as a global disease.

If we take the starting point of decolonial archaeology, we find that it differs enormously from community archaeology because it does not look to satisfy a community's demands, for example, the demands of colonial narratives. It is easy to understand that the fact that a group founds a practice does not make it ethically correct. Similarly, decolonial archaeology is not a form of indigenous archaeology since, as J. Watkins noted, some indigenous archaeologists do not consider there to be significant differences between scientific archaeology and indigenous archaeology (Watkins, 2011). For decolonial archaeology, however, there are great differences; science has been an instrument that has allowed us to ignore the fact that modernity has a dark side, coloniality, in which millions of human beings, ecosystems, flora, and fauna are preyed upon to generate capital accumulations in the global north. If we look at the Colombian case and the Argentine case, the use of excavation and recording techniques generated a credibility substrate for decolonized narratives of local histories. Thus, these archaeologies appeal to reason to demystify hegemonic narratives, but they do not suppose that there is a neutral field of ethics that science grants. In these cases, archaeology is decolonial or it is nothing.

The case of northern Colombia shows us that archaeology is an instrument that has allowed for the colonization of historical narratives; archaeology has turned sacred sites into garbage dumps, making it inconceivable that the practice of archaeology can be used for local empowerment projects. In this case, the role of decolonial archaeology is not to propose more excavations to solve the plundering problems that communities have suffered; thus, the way out is to support the repatriation processes set up by local communities.

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